

March 20, 2018

## KICK BUTTS DAY EMPOWERS ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA YOUTH AGAINST TOBACCO

*National Day of Activism Encourages Teachers, Youth Leaders and Health Advocates to Fight Back and Speak Out Against Tobacco*



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**Pensacola, Fla.** – Escambia County, Florida's Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) are fighting back against the tobacco industry for the 23<sup>rd</sup> annual Kick Butts Day on March 21, 2018. This national day of activism, sponsored by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, encourages youth to reject the tobacco industry's marketing efforts and stay tobacco free.

SWAT's theme this year is "Inform, Expose, and Kick Butts!" The student-led organization is focused on educating Florida youth about Big Tobacco and the \$558.8 million spent each year in Florida to market its harmful products to vulnerable populations, including youth.

To commemorate the observance, Escambia County SWAT youth will participate in the 'Taking Down Tobacco' training program. This program provides an educational overview of tobacco use and prevention while empowering youth to use the power of their voice to combat marketing tactics.

"The key is to inform ourselves and then spread the message to our peers and community in creative ways," said Kendyl Knight, a member of Escambia SWAT.

About 90 percent of smokers start before they turn 18 and rarely consider the long-term health consequences of smoking. Because of nicotine, the highly addictive drug found in tobacco, three out of four youth smokers continue smoking well into adulthood, often with deadly consequences. In fact, about half of long-term smokers die prematurely from smoking-related causes.

As new and emerging tobacco products become more popular, especially among our youth, Tobacco Free Florida is committed to educating youth about the dangers of tobacco and the importance of prevention.

SWAT is Florida's statewide youth organization working to mobilize, educate and equip Florida youth to revolt against and de-glamorize Big Tobacco. For more information, or to get involved, visit [swatflorida.com](http://swatflorida.com).

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### About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

Follow us on Twitter at [@HealthyEscambia](#) and on [Facebook](#). For more information about the Florida Department of Health please visit [www.FloridaHealth.gov](http://www.FloridaHealth.gov).

**About Tobacco Free Florida**

The department's Tobacco Free Florida campaign is a statewide cessation and prevention campaign funded by Florida's tobacco settlement fund. Since the program began in 2007, more than 188,000 Floridians have successfully quit using one of Tobacco Free Florida's free tools and services. There are now approximately 451,000 fewer adult smokers in Florida than there were 10 years ago, and the state has saved \$17.7 billion in health care costs.

To learn more about Tobacco Free Florida's Quit Your Way services, visit [www.TobaccoFreeFlorida.com](http://www.TobaccoFreeFlorida.com) or follow the campaign on [Facebook](#) or on [Twitter](#).